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RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #1972/01 2402241
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 282241Z AUG 07
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6564
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7180
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 8436

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 001972

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DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS, IRAQ

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage August 28 on President Chen Shui-bian's visit to Central America; on the DPP's final draft version of its "Normal Country Resolution" Monday; and on the possible development of casino tourism in Taiwan. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" front-paged a banner headline that read "Normal Country Resolution Sets the Tone for [Taiwan's] Name Change and Writing of a New Constitution."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" editorial criticized the opposition parties for taunting and jeering at President Chen's efforts to maintain Taiwan's foreign relations. A commentary in the on-line paper of the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times," however, criticized President Chen for turning Taiwan's biggest supporter, the United States, into an enemy. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times," on the other hand, lashed out at the United States for failing to support Taiwan and its democracy. A "China Times" op-ed discussed the impasse the United States is facing in Iraq. The article said it is the democracy that Washington sowed in the Middle East that has ignited the flames of war in the area. End summary.

¶3. U.S.-Taiwan Relations

A) "Opposition Parties Should Not Taunt and Jeer Taiwan's Efforts to Maintain [Ties with] Its Allies"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (8/28):

"... It may be said that President Chen Shui-bian's visit to Central America this time has suffered considerable frustration, inconvenience and suppression. Not only did the United States deliberately downgrade the courtesy treatment of Chen during his transit due to its opposition to the DPP government's push for a referendum on Taiwan's UN bid, but Taiwan's allies in Central America also failed to put into words their support for Taiwan's UN bid in a joint communique signed during the summit. All these episodes triggered taunts and jeers from the Blue camp, which lampooned that our allies only take money but refuse to voice their support for Taiwan, and that Chen's diplomatic efforts were nothing more than money diplomacy. ...

"... Chen's clarification was in reality aimed at pointing out the fact that the crux of Taiwan's diplomatic predicament lies in China's suppression and not any wrongdoings of Taiwan's providing aid to other countries. Any political party, when becoming the ruling party, will encounter the same predicament and similar diplomatic pressure unless it accepts the one-China principle and is willing to become part of China. ..."

B) "Why Turn the United States into an Enemy?"

Deputy Editor-in-Chief Sheena Chang wrote in the on-line paper of

the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (8/27):

"... Frankly speaking, Taiwan indeed needs the United States' support when it comes to its stance in the international community. The proposals of those minor allies [supporting Taiwan's UN bid] were nothing but an overture [in the UN]. Only the superpower United States can really support and sustain Taiwan's international stance; without the United States' assistance, Taiwan will hardly see any substantive progress with regard to its attempt to seek more opportunities to participate in international organizations, because when it comes to international politics, first it is about strength, and second numbers.

"The number of Taiwan's allies is far smaller than that of Beijing's, thus the proposal [of its UN bid] cannot be approved. But if the United States can help negotiate for Taiwan proactively and come up with some new arrangements, it will likely create major breakthroughs for Taiwan's situation in the international community.

In contrast, should Taiwan's biggest support in the international community change overnight to become obstruction that restrains [Taiwan], it will generate incalculable damage to Taiwan's national interests and future development. ... Taiwan cannot wait to seek support from the United States; how can it annoy this big brother and turn it into an enemy? Few countries in the world want to confront the United States, let alone the fact that Taiwan is in such an inferior situation and its reliance on the United States is so deep. ..."

C) "No Friend of Democracy in the US"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (8/28):

"The administration of President Chen Shui-bian can be accused of many things, from sending mixed signals to contradicting itself on

promises it made to its allies. But one thing it cannot be blamed for is striving to provide Taiwanese with the international space and recognition they deserve. And those efforts -- even when they irritate officials in the US State Department and result in diplomatic jousting of the most juvenile kind -- deserve to be commended, for they are indeed in the best interest of the nation. What is truly deplorable is that the US -- Taiwan's supposed ally and a country that, in his new book *The Assault on Reason*, former US vice president Al Gore pompously says brought the gift of democracy to the world -- would turn to humiliating practices to force Taiwanese officials into a direction that is not in the best interest of the people they were elected to represent. Or -- as seems to be brewing on the horizon -- for it to pressure other countries into blocking Taiwan from seeking UN membership. ...

"The end result of the White House's unaccountable practices in the past seven years, in fact, is orders of magnitude worse than anything Chen could ever do. And yet, on every occasion the White House has worked against Taiwanese bids to join international institutions, US officials -- including former US secretary of state Colin Powell -- will paternalistically, if not condescendingly, argue that Taiwan should instead work on 'strengthening' or 'consolidating' its democracy, as if speaking to a small child that is unable to walk on its own. ... Oddly enough, we never hear US officials call on China to 'strengthen' or 'further' its democracy. Perhaps it is because Beijing chose to walk down a different path, one in which the rights and freedoms of the people the Chinese government supposedly represents can be trampled without consequences. It would seem, therefore, that when a country has to deal with the US, being a democracy is in fact a handicap.

"If the State Department and the White House want to dictate Taiwan's choices, they should at least have the decency to refrain from couching all of their self-serving policies in democratic terms that can only make a travesty of this gift to humanity. Taiwan's democracy, though imperfect like that of all its brethren, is doing well enough. After all, Cuban President Fidel Castro never offered to send monitors to oversee elections in Taiwan. The US can't say as much, ironically. Chen's wildest blunders, about-faces and broken promises -- all made in the context of the quest for the recognition of Taiwan -- have not endangered lives or made a joke of democratic

principles. Unlike Washington's own mistakes, his have not resulted in countless deaths, a gargantuan national debt and a step backward in what indeed used to be a democratic system that deserved to be the envy of the world. Which begs the question: Who should be advising whom on the need to further one's democracy?"

4. Iraq

"U.S.-Style Democracy Ignites Anti-U.S. Flames of War"

Tsai Zeng-jia, associate research fellow at National Chengchi

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University's Institute of International Relations, opined in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation 400,000]j (8/27):

"... With regard to the impasse the United States is facing in Iraq now, some people believe that it is because, following the United States' toppling of the Saddam Hussein regime, the weak elected government has made Iraq leaderless. Some, however, interpret it as a backlash of the radical Islamic forces in the wake of U.S. military entering Iraq. But if we go to the bottom of the matter, we find that, to its surprise, the United States' predicament in the Middle East today is an evil result of its sowing democracy, something that it is most proud of. The democratic system, whose power distribution is based on races and religious sects, has broken the national identification [in Iraq] that used to glue together different denominations and ethnical forces and put the Middle East in endless chaos and turbulence. ...

"With its national identification falling apart, the flames of war ignited by the democratic system have turned the simple power distribution by denominations and ethnics in the Middle East into waves of anti-occupation, anti-U.S. and anti-hegemonic powers in Iraq. ... How [President George W.] Bush is going to put out the flames of war set by the democracy he sowed is the biggest problem that the United States is facing in the Middle East nowadays."

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